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AUTHOR Smith, Nancy E.
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ABSTRACT

Limited English proficient adults represent a special population group served by the federally funded Adult Education Act. Usually, limited English speakers attend English as a second language (ESL) classes offered by state and local agencies. In the last decade, changes in the approach to ESL instruction have deemphasized academic ESL and focused instead on providing job-related English as a second language. Many parallels exist between program designs for bilingual vocational training and adult basic education-English as a second language classes because the adult learners in both cases are of limited English proficiency and because their educational needs or goals are similar. The overall purpose of adult education is to enable participants to function better in society. For most adults, second language learning should be based on the communication and life coping skills needed on the job and outside the classroom. The products developed for the federally funded bilingual vocational training program are valuable resources for use by educators who work with limited English proficient adults. Because the products have been field tested with limited English proficient adults--and have been shown to work--the job-related English as a second language program strategies and practices described in these products are valuable to ESL teachers. These strategies can improve adult basic education and ESL classes for adults who are limited English proficient. Research and programs concerning teaching limited English speaking persons are described in this paper. A bibliography is appended. (KC)

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Prepared by

Nancy E. Smith

Education Program Specialist
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education
Revised January 1986

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Introduction

Limited English proficient adults represent a special population group served by the federally-funded, State-administered Adult Education Act (P.L. 91-320, as amended). Usually, limited English-speakers attend English as a second language (ESL) classes offered by state and local education agencies as part of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. In the last decade, changes in the approach to ESL instruction have deemphasized academic ESL and focused instead on providing job-related English as a second language. Adult learners demand appropriate instruction reflecting their personal needs, including employment and self-sufficiency; job-related English instruction helps meet adults' needs.

Bilingual Vocational Education: Definition

One program model which successfully incorporates job-related English is bilingual vocational education [authorized by the Vocational Education Act (P.L. 98-524)]. The major goal of bilingual vocational training programs is to make limited English-speaking adults more employable by teaching them to speak English and perform a job skill. A bilingual vocational training project has two bilingual instructors who work as a team, one to teach the occupational skill, the other to teach English. The vocational instructor uses both languages to teach the skills needed for the occupation. The ESL instructor attends the vocational classes to observe what specific language the participants need to learn and then focuses the job-related English lessons on the vocabulary (such as safety language) that the trainees will use on the job.

The instructors use classroom methods and materials that are appropriate for limited English proficient adults. Teachers provide instruction in English or in the trainees' own language whenever a basic concept is not understood in English. Because English is not the only language of instruction used in a bilingual vocational training program, participants do not have to wait until they know the English language to learn a skill or trade. Therefore, as a result of the two-language approach, they benefit immediately from the vocational component of the program because they understand the language of instruction, and can be understood by the instructor.

Benefits of Bilingual Vocational Education

Because it makes the trainees employable, bilingual vocational training represents a pragmatic approach to adult education. This ideal model of providing bilingual vocational skills training concurrently with job-specific ESL prepares limited English-speaking learners for employment in the same amount of time as programs using traditional English-only

training. The employment rate of participants rises dramatically in comparison to both the national average and the average rate for the local labor areas served by the bilingual vocational training program. The program's effectiveness is further demonstrated by the fact that trainees' job earnings keep pace with inflation. Participants who complete bilingual vocational training are less dependent on social welfare programs than are other limited English proficient adults. Program completers have a lower incidence of poverty than adults who do not participate.

Within several years of program completion participants quickly become self-supporting workers who pay federal income taxes equal to the government's investment in their training. In short, bilingual vocational training promotes self-sufficiency.

Legislative History

Congress first authorized legislation for bilingual vocational training under the Vocational Education Act (P.L. 94-482), as amended by the Education Amendments of 1974. Under the Education Amendments of 1976, Congress expanded the program's authorization -- alloting twenty-five percent of the appropriated funds for training bilingual vocational instructors, and allocating ten percent of the funds for developing bilingual vocational materials, methods, and techniques. Most recently, Congress enacted the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-524) and changed the allotment of funds -- alloting fifteen percent of the appropriated funds for instructor training programs, and allocating ten percent of the funds for developing bilingual vocational training materials, methods and techniques.

This paper describes the different publications produced under the Bilingual Vocational Training Materials, Methods, and Techniques Program.

Implications for Adult Basic Education Programs

Because their poor English prevents them from performing adequately in an environment requiring English language skills, many persons with limited English proficiency are either unemployed or underemployed. They are served by programs funded under both the Adult Education Act and the Vocational Education Act. Program administrators and teachers who work with limited English proficient adults can adapt bilingual vocational education practices. Research and development products designed specifically for bilingual vocational training participants are useful for teaching limited English proficient adults. The practices and strategies discussed in these products can enhance services offered by the State-administered Adult Basic Education program.

Successful Strategies

Rudolph Troike's monograph called Assessing Successful Strategies in Bilingual Vocational Training Programs describes six components to be considered when planning an adult ESL program (Rosslyn, Virginia: InterAmerica Research Associates, 1981, page 3). The six components are:

Program planners should assess the need for educational services. For instance, will the ABE-ESL program offer classes in a neighborhood easily accessible to limited English proficient adults?

Planners should set measurable program and instructional objectives. Staff members need to know the goals they are expected to accomplish.

Planners should establish effective and objective methods for measuring success. For instance, will the ABE-ESL program use a participant's improved English proficiency as a measure of success? Will the program use pre- and post-tests to measure a learner's gains in language proficiency?

Planners should ensure that adequate time, facilities, and equipment are available to the program to meet the established objectives. For instance, because second language learning takes time, ESL classes should meet frequently enough to promote the adult's language acquisition. Adult education classes should be scheduled to accomodate the participant's other responsibilities such as jobs and child care. Facilities should be comfortable; because many ABE-ESL classes meet in converted or surplus elementary schools, program planners should requisition adult-sized furniture. Also, to supplement classroom instruction, planners should also acquire equipment in working condition.

Planners should secure adequate funding so that ESL instructors can be hired for an entire year. Part-time, temporary staff members may not be able to meet the project's objectives so continuity is important to the project's success.

Program planners should hire well-trained staff members and provide pre- or in-service training to enhance their skills. For instance, teachers trained to provide academic ESL instruction need information about teaching job-related English as a second language.

ABE-ESL program planners should consider these six components when structuring an adult basic education program for limited English-speakers.

Successful Strategies for Instructor Training

Morris Peterson and Regino Chavez describe nine program

components in their monograph called Identification of Successful Strategies in Bilingual Vocational Instructor Training Programs (Arlington, Virginia: Juarez and Associates, 1984, pages xx - xviii). The nine areas of project operations are:

- Design and development of Bilingual Vocational Instructor Training Projects
- Project staffing and staff development
- Curriculum and instruction
- Coordination among offices of the sponsoring organization
- Training and technical assistance
- Student outreach and recruitment
- Student intake, assessment, and assignment
- Student orientation, job or career counseling, and support services
- Job development, job placement, and follow-up.

Program planners should consider these nine components when structuring an instructor training program.

Monograph

One of the earliest products funded under the bilingual vocational training funds was Development Associates' Monograph for Bilingual Vocational Training Projects (Arlington, Virginia: 1979). ESL staff members may use the monograph for guidance in organizing, managing, and evaluating adult education programs.

Overcoming Obstacles

A more recent product developed by L. Miranda and Associates, Overcoming Obstacles to Full Participation of Trainees in Bilingual Vocational Training Programs has implications for educators working with limited English proficient adults. Miranda et al found that the obstacles for participants entering either ABE-ESL or bilingual vocational training are similar (Bethesda, Maryland: 1983). The obstacles to education for adults may be of a financial, instructional, or cultural nature. The project report identifies fifteen obstacles which prevent an individual either from enrolling in or completing an ABE-ESL class. These obstacles are:

- health and substance abuse problems

- family emergencies
- pregnancy
- lack of transportation
- child care and housing -- or the inability to afford transportation, child care and housing
- anxiety about problems at home, at school, or at work
- lack of self-confidence
- inability to adapt to the classroom environment
- lack of knowledge of -- or resistance to -- appropriate behavior
- inter-group conflicts
- unfamiliarity with school, training, or work environment
- reluctance to speak in class
- misperceptions of training
- unrealistic expectations
- lack of interest or motivation

Eight other major obstacles to participation are programmatic:

- inappropriate or inconvenient location and scheduling
- unfamiliarity of staff members with appropriate service providers
- inadequate screening, placement and progress assessment of trainees
- inadequate orientation
- inadequate counseling
- unfamiliarity of staff members with trainees' cultures, language and educational backgrounds
- staff members who are unempathetic or who are uncommitted to helping trainees
- inadequate staff development to meet the trainees' needs.

This research study is a valuable resource for ABE-ESL

program planners because it documents what methods and procedures adult educators have used successfully to identify, prevent or resolve obstacles to limited English proficient adults' participation in ESL classes.

Instructor Competencies

Kirschner Associates' publication, A Monograph for Bilingual Vocational Instructor Competencies, lists the minimum competencies needed by instructors who teach job-related English as a second language (Washington, D. C.: 1981). Because teaching job-related English is a departure from traditional academic ESL instruction, few standards for judging the quality of instruction exist. This monograph provides such standards. The four general competency categories are:

- Plan for instruction
- Use instructional materials and equipment
- Provide instruction
- Measure learners' progress.

The monograph includes eleven specific competencies and explanatory statements which may be used for adult ESL staff development activities. Note: the information in this monograph is particularly useful to ESL programs because it provides guidelines for hiring staff members and providing in-service training.

Teaching English for the Job

Ross MacDonald and his associates have written a handbook called Improving Techniques in Teaching English for the Job which suggests methods for ESL teachers to use in incorporating job-related English in their classes (Rosslyn, Virginia: InterAmerica Research Associates, 1982). Because adults learn a second language more readily when it is related to content -- rather than as an end in itself -- ESL teachers should design an instructional program focusing on functional language teaching. The handbook describes how a computer can be used in analyzing job-related or technical text material as a basis for developing language instruction for limited English proficient adult learners. The presentation is not technical and no prior familiarity with computers is assumed by the authors. Adult educators may use the handbook to incorporate characteristics of the functional approach to teaching English as a second language.

Foreign Language Occupations

Another product available to adult ESL teachers which could influence their instructional program design is Identification of Occupations in Which a Foreign Language is an Asset written by Richard Clelland and his colleagues (Bethesda, Maryland: L. Miranda and Associates, 1982). The fifteen nonprofessional occupations identified are:

- banking
- communications
- construction and building maintenance
- food service
- health care
- hotel
- nursing
- office
- protective service and corrections
- recreation
- rehabilitation and therapy
- retail and wholesale trade
- social service
- transportation
- travel and tourism occupations

The ability to speak a language other than English can be an asset in three instances:

- in obtaining jobs where an employee deals frequently with non-English speakers
- in advancing professionally
- in receiving salary benefits.

When ESL teachers plan their classes, bilingual vocational training opportunities are not usually available to the adult learners. As a result, adult educators may offer vocational English as a second language (VESL) classes focusing on the vocabulary and grammar used in occupational settings. ESL

teachers frequently serve as counselors to their adult students, helping them find adequate housing, enrolling their children in school, providing health care for their families, and finding jobs. This monograph provides ESL program planners with information about occupations in which their class participants are most likely to find employment.

Bilingual Vocational Oral Proficiency Test

Resource Development Institute designed the Bilingual Vocational Oral Proficiency Test which is suitable for use with limited English proficient adults entering ABE-ESL classes (Austin, Texas: 1980). This criterion referenced instrument was field tested with adults from several language groups and is a valid measure of English at low and mid levels of proficiency. The test has two forms which make it useful for ABE-ESL program administrators and teachers to use in assessing very low level English-speakers' proficiency. The two forms assess an adult's speaking and listening skills; the first form measures a participant's level of English proficiency upon entering a program, the second form determines what gains a participant has made while enrolled. Because the participants' gains in English proficiency is one measure of success in an ESL program, this is an appropriate test instrument for use by adult education programs.

External Resources

Kirschner Associates conducted another study entitled Strategies for Using External Resources in Bilingual Vocational Training Programs: A Guide for Program Planning and Operation (Washington, D. C.: 1983). The guide describes how adult education programs can provide instruction and services more effectively by using resources from business, industries, educational institutions, public and private agencies, community based organizations, and individual volunteers. External resources typically include:

- expertise and experience of staff
- facilities
- furnishings
- up-to-date equipment
- instructional materials
- supplies
- transportation

- communications

- supportive and human services.

These resources may improve many aspects of program operations including:

- recruitment

- language proficiency assessment

- curriculum review and development

- instruction

- counseling.

Other support services for adult learners include:

- stipends

- tuition grants or waivers

- child care

- referrals for physical, dental, or mental health care

- housing assistance

- nutrition education

- translation services.

This guide provides detailed recommendations for identifying, obtaining and using external resources and community linkages to augment education programs.

Consumer Education Materials

"Adapting Consumer Education Materials for Limited English Proficient Adult Populations in Vocational Education" is the first of two contracts funded in fiscal year 1985 (Washington, D. C.: 1986). The contractor, Miranda Associates, Inc., will:

- review and analyze consumer education materials that have been field tested, validated, and used in vocational settings;

- develop criteria for adapting materials; and

- compile adapted consumer education materials.

By June 1986, validated consumer education materials for

limited English proficient adults will be available. (See Bibliography).

Materials Dissemination

"Identification and Dissemination of Bilingual Vocational Training Materials" is the second of two contracts funded in fiscal year 1985 (Berkeley, CA: 1986). The contractor, Americas Corporation, will collect and disseminate bilingual vocational training materials created since 1975 by federally-funded Bilingual Vocational Training Program grantees. By September 1986, clearinghouses will make available an annotated bibliography of bilingual vocational training materials.

Conclusion

Many parallels exist between program designs for bilingual vocational training and Adult Basic Education-English as a second language (ABE-ESL) classes because the adult learners in both cases are of limited English proficiency and because their educational needs or goals are similar. The overall purpose of adult education is to enable participants to function better in society. For most adults, second language learning should be based on their communication and life coping skills needed on the job and outside of the classroom.

The products developed for the federally-funded bilingual vocational training program are valuable resources for use by educators who work with limited English proficient adults. Because the products have been field tested with limited English proficient adults - and have been proven to work - the job-related English as a second language program strategies and practices described in these products are valuable to ESL teachers. Without a doubt, if adult educators will adapt these products, these successful strategies and practices can improve adult basic education and ESL classes for adults who are limited English proficient.

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